THE BACKGROUND GROUP.

The crowd huzzas, the music madly plays;
'Tis meet, for, lo! it is the day of days;
The home-returning heroes come; a cry
Of welcome should be lifted to the sky
And flowers strew the people-trampled ways.

The drums beat martially; with rhythmic beat
The steps resound along the gaping street,
Hark, what acclaims! And how the folk do press
To see, to touch, may be, the very dress
Of those who dared the death, when Life is sweet!

But stay! where joy is general, where the sound
Of jubilant voices rends the air around,
Why is yon group so silent in its place,
With war's impassioned image face to face;
Wherefore those eyes cast nun-like on the ground?

Who are these hangers-back, these dark-robed ones?
They are the mothers who are reft of sons,
The wives whose dearest lie all uncaressed
Afar with vital stains on brow or breast;
The children orphaned at the mouths of guns.

—Richard Burton, in the Outlook.

What Made a Man of Him.

By W. D. Hulbert.

IT WAS on a warm, pleasant July evening that old Mr. Howard, sitting on the veranda of his son's summer cottage at Mackinac, let his grandchildren coax him into telling about his youthful start in the same place. This is his story:

It seems a great deal farther away to you than to me—the time when John Jacob Astor was boss of everything here, and I was sixteen years old. I suppose I was the youngest clerk in the American Fur Company, and I'm quite sure I was the lonesomest, after I had been here three months. A letter from my mother had come up by bateau and canoe from Montreal, telling me that my sister Stella was at death's door, and the letter was five weeks old when I got it.

As soon as I'd read it I went to Mr. Crooks—Crooks and Stewart were the Mackinac agents of the fur company—and I showed it to him, and begged to be allowed to go home. I was from New York State, and had persuaded my father to get me into the service, for my head was full of romantic notions of adventure.

"No, you can't go," Mr. Crooks told me, firmly, although he seemed sorry for me. "You are like a soldier. You've enlisted for five years, and you must serve your time. We couldn't get anybody this side of Montreal to take your place. Besides, what's the use of going, my boy? The letter is five weeks old, and your sister is either quite well now—or in heaven."

That refusal seemed to me like rank tyranny. I was sick of the service, anyway. My notion that fur-trading meant shooting and fishing and having a good time in the open air had been all wrong. From five in the morning till seven in the evening, except for an hour at noon, I sorted and packed and carried furs—and I can remember those backaches to this hour. At night I couldn't sleep. The company's boarding house was hot and crowded and rank and noisy, and in summer the whole village rang with the yells of Indians and the shouts and songs of the voyageurs.

After I left Mr. Crooks, I began thinking of all the hardships before me. I was only at the beginning of my trouble! Not to see any of my people for five years! And I must soon be sent away back in the wilderness, where I could get no letters at all, or only once a year or so. Then the devil came along and tempted me.

Among the voyageurs that I had become acquainted with on the long voyage from Montreal, was Francois Robidaux, a French boatman from Quebec. He was still a "pork-eater," as we used to call new men that had not got used to the company's rations. On the voyage up, Francois had been jolly and good-natured, but after three months he was still grumbling at the Mackinac fare. I can remember the very tones of his voice after more than sixty years. Francois would say:

"Me, I wish I was back in Montreal for sure—den I could get good grub. Hall de way up dey's give out salt pork and good pea-soup and hard bread, but now dey's got us here, baptime! we don't get noting, honly hulled corn and a small little bit of tallow, and some flour for pancakes on Sunday. And Baptiste Beaubien, he's say I'll be glad for get dat before de brigade come back to Mackinac next summer. He's say hall last winter he's get noting for a month honly fish wisout salt. 'Me, I hain' goin' for eat no such trash—no, sch!'"

And so Francois had proposed to me that we should take a bateau some dark, moonless night and set out for Buffalo. He said we could follow the shores of Lake Huron and Lake Erie, hoist a sail when the wind was fair and camp on the beach when it was too stormy to travel, and with good luck we might make the voyage in two or three weeks.

I had refused his proposal, and I had even mildly rebuked him for making it; but it lingered in my mind, and that evening, when my heart was sore with the thought of my sister's illness, it tempted me hard. In fact, I went to Francois and told him that if he still wanted to go, I'd have a talk with him the next day about it; and then I went back to the boarding house.

I hadn't been there ten minutes when one of the other clerks came in and said: "Howard, Mr. Crooks wants to see you in the private office."

My heart gave a great bound. I thought Mr. Crooks had relented, and would let me go home, after all. But it was for a very different purpose that he wanted me. A party of twenty-five men was at work on Bois Blanc Island, cutting wood for the use of the agency at Mackinac through the winter. The clerk who had had charge of the work had been taken sick, and two of the men had brought him across to Mackinac in a canoe. Some one must take his place, for wood-cutting could not be finished for several days, and Mr. Crooks had selected me.

It was the making of me, and that is just what he meant it to be. He saw that if there was any good stuff in me, I should be steadied and attached to the company's interests by being put into a place of responsibility and command. Many a time I've saved a young fellow since then by putting responsibility on his shoulders.

Well, the sun had not risen out of Lake Huron the next morning when I and the two voyageurs who had brought the sick man home got into the canoe and started for Bois Blanc. I sat in the middle on my bag of clothing, and the others took their places forward and aft.

Alec Prevanche, who was in the stern, was a tall, broad-shouldered Frenchman, strong as a horse and one of the best canoemen on the upper lakes. He was a handsome fellow, with curly hair, a heavy black beard and dark, flashing eyes. As long as he was sober, he was one of the jolliest men on the island; but when he was drunk he was a crazy man.

Alec wore a black feather in his cap to signify that he was the bully of a brigade of voyageurs. They used to say that he had been in more fights than any other man in Mackinac, and had never been whipped. It was also said that he had killed a man in a drunken brawl at Quebec, and that he dared not go back there for fear of arrest and punishment.

Joe Rolette, who sat in the bow, was a wiry, leathery little man between fifty and sixty years of age. His hair and beard were fast turning gray, but he was stronger and more active than most of the younger men among the voyageurs. Both were alert paddlers, and when they put their strength into the stroke the canoe leaped forward as if she were alive and something had stung her.

In about an hour we reached Bois Blanc, and I stepped ashore and inspected my forces. There was little for me to do except to see that the choppers did not shirk, and I thought I should have an easy time of it; but after dinner, as the men sat on the bench and smoked their pipes, it struck me that there was more loud talking and joking than I had expected to hear.

The French-Canadian voyageurs and boatmen of those days were always ready for a laugh and a song, and no other class of men would have put up with their hardships and privations so cheerfully; but it seemed to me the twenty-five were noisy and boisterous rather than cheerful and jolly.

When the noon hour was over, I gave the word and they went back to their wood-cutting, but some of them moved sullkily, and I fancied they did not work as industriously as in the morning. I suspected they had made up their minds that I was only a boy and that they could do as they pleased, and this suspicion frightened me. There I was, alone with twenty-five men, some of them three or four times as old as myself, and if I lost control of them I should be disgraced. Somehow the idea of deserting had entirely gone out of my mind, you see. Although I was scared, you musn't think I showed the white feather. No; all the afternoon I went about among the men, speaking a quiet word now and then, but never attempting any bullying. But things plainly grew worse rather than better.

I could not imagine what was the matter with the men, until late in the day I happened to pass near Joe Rolette and noticed a strong odor of whiskey. In an instant I understood. Joe and Alec must have brought some liquor from Mackinac. Before morning the whole crew would be drunk!

Then I remembered noticing that Alec's jacket had been carefully spread over some large object in the bottom of the canoe. I had paid little attention to it at the time, supposing that it was merely a bundle of clothes, but now I knew it had been a jug.

Now that I had definite knowledge, my wits seemed to clear. I passed on without stopping, and in a little while came back again, this time from a different direction. Joe and another man had dropped their axes and were talking together in low tones. I slipped quietly behind a tree and listened for a moment.

"How much did you bring from Mackinac, Joe?" asked the other chopper, speaking in French, which was then almost as familiar to me as English.

"A big jugful," said Joe, "and it's the genuine stuff, all right—none of your tobacco and water, such as they sell to the Indians. Alec's got a little in a bottle in his pocket and he's given most of the boys a taste, but he's saving the jug for to-night."

"Hasn't he drunk any himself?"

"Not a drop; but just you wait! He'll have a high old time before morning, and that Howard boy will catch it if he tries to interfere."

I had heard enough, so I stole away without being seen.

Then I made a circuit through the woods, and approached the two men again, taking pains to attract their attention. Seeing me coming, they took up their axes and went to work.

Something I was bound to do, but I couldn't see my way clear. To go to Alec and demand the liquor would be useless, and with Alec's refusal to obey there would be an end of all discipline. I fancied that one or two of the older men looked at me with pity, and I wondered if there would be any use in calling on them to support me. But if part of them did stand by me it would probably bring on a fight, and possibly the death of several men. I decided to depend on myself alone. If the worst came to the worst, I could jump into a canoe and go to Mackinac for help. But that would be to confess I could not control my men.

Alec was further from the shore of all the men, and was felling a big maple. I heard his axe-strokes following one another quick and sharp. But suddenly they ceased. The tree could not have fallen, for there had been no crash. Keeping myself pretty well concealed, I went toward the spot where I had last seen the big Frenchman. There I found the tree cut half-way through, the axe sticking in the wood, and Alec gone.

I considered a moment. Alec had a bottle. He had probably gone to fill that bottle. If I could find him, I might find out where the jug was, and might be able to destroy it.

First I went to my tent for my rifle; then I circled around till I was again near the big maple, but further back in the woods. I am not ashamed to own that I was shaking from head to foot for fear of Alec, but stepping as lightly as I knew how, I kept on. I had not gone far when I caught sight of Alec's tall form bending down. I crept a little nearer, and saw him take the jug from under the root of a large black birch and begin filling a big flat flask from it.

Suddenly a twig broke under my foot and Alec looked up and saw me. His face got red instantly, and he broke out into a volley of oaths, mingled with the foulest names in a voyageur's vocabulary. It was just what I needed; it made me mad, too. Quick as thought the rifle came to my shoulder.

"Drop that jug!" I shouted.

"Not much, I won't!" he cried, and I fired.

The bullet went just where I had intended—I could shoot with any man in those days. It flew so close to his ear that he dropped the flask in alarm. The whiskey gurgled out on the moss. He still held the jug. For an instant he faced me, and then I dropped the empty rifle into my left hand, stepped forward and said, "Give it here!"

It was years before I could quite make up my mind why Alec obeyed me. Of course the bullet whispered something to his nerves as it went by, and I suppose I looked determined. But there was another reason—I was not really alone. Back of me was the whole power of the fur company, with its thousands of employes under the command of men who were afraid of nothing, and who knew perfectly how to deal with a drunken, rebellious voyageur. Alec had a knife at his belt, and he could have killed me then and there; but he knew that if he did his own life would not have been safe anywhere between Quebec and the Rocky Mountains.

I carried the jug down to the beach and smashed it on a rock in full sight of the whole crew, who had heard the shot and had hastily gathered to see what it meant. Joe Rolette gave an angry exclamation and stepped forward as if he were about to interfere, but a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder and a gruff voice said in his ear, "Let him alone!"

It was Hermidas Paquin, the oldest and best voyageur in the crew, who spoke, and Joe stood still.

That evening several of the men, Joe and Alec among them, held a consultation, and in a few minutes Joe came over to where I sat, a little apart from the men.

"Mr. Howard," said he, in a wheedling tone, "you won't tell Mr. Crooks or Mr. Stewart about Alec, will you?"

"If you two behave yourselves," I told him, "I will not tell them about Alec or about you."

"About me!" cried Joe. "Why, I didn't do anything. It was Alec."

"I know all about it," I said, "and I don't want to hear anything more from you. Not another word! If you do your work quietly and peaceably, I won't say anything; but if there is any more trouble, you will know what to expect."

Joe went back to report to his comrades, and they seemed relieved; but it was a very silent and sullen crew of men who took out their pipes and tobacco and sat down for the regular evening smoke.

It was a lovely summer evening; no wind, and the blaze of the camp-fire went straight toward the sky. The stars came out one after another, and a loon was calling somewhere, far away across the water. I never hear a loon crying and mocking but I think of that loon. It was the most memorable evening of my life.

No voyageur could hold anger on such a night, when he was well fed and enjoying the twilight. Somebody cracked a joke. Some one else began to hum a tune. In five minutes the men were all talking and laughing as if nothing had ever happened to disturb their good nature, and my victory was complete.

Three days later the wood-cutting was finished and I was back at Mackinac again—a man and a devoted clerk to the company, thanks to the wisdom and kindness of Mr. Crooks.—Youth's Companion.

Sure Enough.

If there were as many men who know how to pay the editor as well as they know how to run the paper, what a jolly time newspaper men would have.—Press and Printer.

PRINTING A SECRET PAPER.

How Clever Russian Revolutionists Baffled the Spies.

To set up and print a four-page paper in Russia where Government spies are as thick as flies without being discovered was a task which a party of revolutionists successfully accomplished in 1884.

The person selected for the position of editor was Mlle. Sladkova, a physician. She rented a suite of rooms in the most open manner and apparently entered upon the practice of her profession.

All the materials were smuggled into the house under the eyes of the house porter, who apparently was given every opportunity to see what was going on. Mlle. Sladkova's assistant was a young student selected for the purpose who applied for lodgings in response to an advertisement written by her and submitted to the porter for approval.

The difficulty experienced in bringing into the house a heavy cylinder weighing over 100 pounds and the iron chase without detection can be imagined. The printing proper was always done in the evenings or at night. All the windows were heavily curtained, so that the impression conveyed to the outside observer was that sleep reigned within the lodgings.

Among the furniture there was a table with a marble top. This served as the base of the printing press. On other occasions, however, a more perfectly even surface was secured in the form of a large, thick looking-glass, which usually hung on the wall.

In this case the table mentioned above was put on pieces of india-rubber and the looking-glass placed on the table. On its even surface the four pages of print was then placed. A pair of small iron rails, a trifle lower than the type, were put close to the form and had upturned hooks at each end.

After the ink had been put on the type, by means of a "gelatine hand-cylinder," and a wet sheet of paper put on it, the heavy metallic cylinder, coated with india-rubber, was placed on the rails at one end of the form. A vigorous push would enable it to jump on the type, traverse the whole of it, and jump off; but it would not fall on the floor because of the hooks.

The printing office worked very successfully, and the police were for a long time at a loss in trying to discover it. The student and Mlle. Sladkova became the objects of close espionage, which was so stringent that to bring in or out the necessary amount of printed or unprinted papers became impossible, and it was decided by the revolutionists to abandon the printing office.

On the day on which the break up was effected spies were posted on the stairs of the lodging, others were in the courtyard, at the gates, and in the street, yet the person who conducted the connection between the printing office and the outside world went into Mlle. Sladkova's rooms, secured and put under his garments those implements which were of particular value and could be taken away, successfully slipped past the spies, and, though closely followed, escaped. Mlle. Sladkova also got away.—Fourth Estate.

Arabic Typewriters.

One of the most interesting of recent inventions is an Arabic typewriter, which has just been patented. Inasmuch as Arabic writing has no fewer than 638 distinct characters, the difficulties to be overcome are obvious. There are, however, in Arabic only twenty-nine letters, each letter having many different forms. One letter, for example, has sixty-four forms, the purpose of this variety in forms being that each letter shall join with the adjacent letters, whatever their shape.

This condition of affairs, obviously, is hard on the typesetter, and for a long time past Arabic scholars have desired to contrive compromise characters, so to speak, which would join well enough, and which would at the same time be satisfactory to the readers of the written language. This has at length been accomplished, and, as one of the results of the chirographic reform, an Arabic typewriter will soon be placed on the market. Thus Arab merchants in this country and all over the world will be able to conduct their correspondence much more easily than hitherto. The Arabic language is in use to-day in Egypt, Persia and Arabia.

Such an achievement gives hope that there may yet arrive a Chinese typewriter, notwithstanding the fact that in that language 24,000 distinct characters are in accepted use among the educated.—Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post.

Pointed Paragraphs.

A man is a miser; a woman is a mystery.

The richer a man's food the poorer his appetite.

The ice man's bill is the blow that cracks the joke.

Feathered bipeds of similar plumage congregate gregariously.

What a woman says goes—when she talks into a telephone receiver.

No man is capable of ruling others who is unable to rule himself.

The woman who never sheds a tear on account of a man doesn't love him.

Unfortunately the chronic bore never leaves a hole in his victims memory.

The only objection the average man had to hard money is that it is hard to get.—Philadelphia Record.

Parish Clerk Sues the Church.

The parish clerk of Sulgrave, England, has again successfully sued the church wardens for the payment of his salary of £3 a year. He said that he had on several occasions provided the communion wine out of his paltry salary.